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Promotion and protection of the rights of children: promotion and protection of the rights of children

Protecting children from bullying

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report of the Secretary-General, submitted in response to General Assembly resolution 69/158, addresses the prevalence of bullying and its impact on children's rights, reviews measures adopted by Member States and other stakeholders to prevent and respond to this phenomenon, identifies good practices and provides guidance on priority actions to ensure children's protection from bullying, including cyberbullying.

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I. Introduction

> "The teacher showed us a sheet of paper and said we could scribble on it, stamp on it, crumple it — but not tear it. Then she asked us to try and straighten it out again, but it was impossible to smooth out all the creases. Then she said this is what it's like when someone gets bullied".
>
> *11-year-old boy*[1]

A. Background

1. The General Assembly, in its resolution 69/158, requested the Secretary-General to submit a report to its seventy-first session on protecting children from bullying. Recognizing that bullying can have a negative impact on the rights of children, the Assembly also requested that the report place an emphasis on its causes and effects and on good practices and guidance to prevent and respond to it.

2. The development of the report of the Secretary-General took on special relevance with the adoption, in September 2015, of the new global development agenda, "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development".[2] Agenda 2030 addresses violence against children as a cross-cutting concern, and includes concrete commitments under a number of Goals and targets. In particular, under Goal 4, on inclusive and equitable quality education, it highlights the importance of knowledge and skills on human rights and the promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, the provision of child, disability and gender-sensitive education facilities and safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all. Under Goal 16, on the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies, it includes a specific target to "end abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children" (target 16.2).

3. Bullying affects a high percentage of children, compromising their health, emotional well-being and academic work, and is associated with long-lasting consequences continuing on into adulthood. Growing access to information and communication technologies (ICTs) places children at risk of online abuse, increasing their vulnerability to cyberbullying. Online or in person, bullying has a serious impact on both the victim and the perpetrator. Moreover, bullying comes at a high cost to society.

4. The United Nations Study on Violence against Children[3] recognized that bullying constitutes a concern of global relevance. To advance the implementation of the study's recommendations, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children issued a number of reports, including "Tackling Violence in Schools: Bridging the Gap between Standards and Practice",[4] "Releasing Children's Potential and Minimizing Risks: ICTs, the Internet and

[1] Ombudsman for Children, Norway, "I want to have good dreams: children's and young people's hearing on bullying and offences at school", October 2014 (http://barneombudet.no/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Good-dreams.pdf).

[2] Resolution 70/1.

[3] A/61/299.

[4] See http://srsg.violenceagainstchildren.org/page/847.

Violence against Children"[5] and "Toward a World Free from Violence: Global Survey on Violence against Children"[6] as well as a report on protecting children from cyberbullying as part of her annual report to the Human Rights Council.[7]

5. Concerned at the lasting consequences of bullying, parents, educators and policymakers are embracing efforts to prevent and address it. Data on the prevalence of this phenomenon is being compiled and disseminated at an accelerated rate, focused research is being advanced to address it and the attention of the world community is being drawn to the issue as a matter of priority as never before.

B. Methodology

6. The report of the Secretary-General was developed through the examination of submissions received from Member States,[8] independent national human rights institutions,[9] United Nations agencies and actors, civil society organizations and other relevant stakeholders.

7. The report also benefitted from expert discussions, consultations with children and a comprehensive literature review of studies and reports on bullying, including cyberbullying.

II. Nature and scope of the problem

"It ruins your life. Your life is stolen from you. It's loss of freedom, that's what bullying is".

19-year-old boy[1]

A. Bullying: a global phenomenon

8. The Convention on the Rights of the Child[10] recognizes children's right to protection from all forms of violence, including physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse.[11]

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[5] See http://srsg.violenceagainstchildren.org/page/1154.

[6] See http://srsg.violenceagainstchildren.org/page/920.

[7] See A//HRC/31/20, sect. III.B.

[8] Andorra, Argentina, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Canada (government of Ontario), Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Georgia, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Kenya, Luxembourg, Malta, Mexico, New Zealand, Norway, Paraguay, the Philippines, Qatar, the Russian Federation, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden and Trinidad and Tobago.

[9] Australia, Belgium, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Republika Srpska (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Canada, Colombia, Denmark, Estonia, Georgia, Ireland, Latvia, Malta, Mauritius, Northern Ireland (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland), Norway, Paraguay and Poland.

[10] Resolution 44/25, annex.

[11] See, in particular, articles 19, 28.2, 32 to 34, 37(a) and 39 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

9. Bullying can be defined as intentional and aggressive behaviour occurring repeatedly against a victim where there is a real or perceived power imbalance, and where the victim feels vulnerable and powerless to defend himself or herself. The unwanted behaviour is hurtful: it can be physical, including hitting, kicking and the destruction of property; verbal, such as teasing, insulting and threatening; or relational, through the spreading of rumours and exclusion from a group.[12]

10. Bullying usually occurs without provocation, and it constitutes a form of peer violence. Children who bully often act out of frustration, humiliation and anger, or to achieve social status, and their actions can inflict physical, psychological and social harm. Children who are bullied are likely to experience interpersonal difficulties, to be depressed, lonely or anxious, to have low self-esteem and to suffer academically, but all actors, including bystanders, and the school climate as a whole are affected detrimentally.[13]

11. Cyberbullying involves the posting or sending of electronic messages, including pictures or videos, aimed at harassing, threatening or targeting another person. A whole gamut of social platforms, including chat rooms, blogs and instant messaging, are used in cyberbullying.[14]

12. Often resulting from a face-to-face interaction at school, cyberbullying can cause profound harm as it can affect the child victim at any time, quickly reaching a wide audience. Moreover, technology perpetuates cyberbullying threats since messages may be posted and reposted over time. Bullying and cyberbullying easily feed into each other, forming a continuum of damaging behaviour.

13. Online or in person, bullying is among children's top concerns. Although rates differ from country to country,[15] it is present and widespread throughout the world, affecting a significant percentage of children as victims, perpetrators or bystanders.[16]

B. Data on bullying and cyberbullying

14. In its resolution 69/158, the General Assembly encouraged Member States "to generate statistical information disaggregated by sex, age and other relevant variables at the national level, and to provide information on disability, with regard to the problem of bullying, as a basis on which to elaborate effective public policies".

15. Data collection on the incidence, type and impact of bullying through household and school-based surveys began in the 1970s. The Global School-based Student Health Survey,[17] which has a module on bullying that covers children aged

[12] Olweus, D., *Bullying at school: What we know and what we can do (Understanding Children's Worlds)*, Wiley-Blackwell, 1993.

[13] See United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), "Stopping Violence in Schools: A Guide for teachers", Paris, 2011.

[14] A/HRC/31/20 paras. 59-66.

[15] See http://www.who.int/chp/gshs/en.

[16] See Roman, Marcela, and Murillo, F. Javier, "Latin America: school bullying and academic achievement", *CEPAL Review*, No. 104, August 2011.

[17] The Global School-based Student Health Survey is a collaborative surveillance project between the World Health Organization (WHO), UNICEF, UNESCO, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to measure and assess behavioural risk and protective factors of children at 11, 13 and 17 years of age in 10 key domains (http://www.who.int/chp/gshs/en).

13 to 15 years of age, has been conducted in 85 countries since 2003. The Health Behaviour in School-aged Children Survey,[18] which was initiated in 1985, includes questions on bullying, covering children at 11, 13 and 15 years of age, and is now conducted in 45 countries. The Trends in Mathematics and Science Study, which poses questions to 10- and 15-year-old children about their experience of being bullied, has been carried out in 46 countries since 2011.

16. There is no international standard definition of what constitutes bullying or consolidated information on its severity and frequency. Existing surveys have addressed the subject with different age groups, covering different time periods and types of behaviour. These divergent approaches and measurements have made it difficult to estimate global prevalence or to generate precise, consistent and representative assessments. This is an area where more research would enable policymakers to develop evidence-based interventions and measure progress in prevention and response.

17. As noted in a 2014 report by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF),[19] consistent bullying patterns show that: boys are more likely than girls to bully others; girls are more likely to use psychological/relational forms of bullying; and boys are more likely to be the victims of bullying. A study using research and data collected from three national surveys[20] reports that the most common forms of bullying include: (a) verbal insults, name-calling and nicknames; (b) hitting, direct aggression and theft; and (c) threats, rumour-spreading and social exclusion or isolation. Some children are bullied because their gender expression does not conform to existing gender norms. Bullying of this type is not captured through disaggregation on the basis of sex.

18. Among all child victims of bullying, the youngest are more likely to be set upon, and they may be the most adversely affected. Although peer victimization appears to decrease as children grow up, the damage done by bullying in a child's earliest years may carry over, and children may perpetuate such behaviour as they grow older. Research indicates that retaliation is an element in a high proportion of aggressive behaviour, whether directly or indirectly.

19. In the Young Lives project on childhood poverty, which followed 12,000 children in Ethiopia, India, Peru and Viet Nam over 15 years, children were asked about their experience of bullying at 15 years of age, and outcomes were examined when they were 19 years of age. The study found that indirect and relational types of bullying, such as humiliation and social exclusion, were the most commonly reported, and while verbal bullying was also common, physical bullying was the least common. The study found that boys were at significantly greater risk of physical and verbal bullying, while girls experienced indirect and relational bullying at higher rates. Children from poor families and out-of-school children were consistently found to experience higher rates of bullying.

20. Children have increasing access to the Internet, starting at ever-younger ages. According to some studies one-third of users worldwide are below 18 years of age; children are online earlier and in greater numbers; and the average age of first-time Internet use is declining.[21]

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[18] The Health Behaviour in School-aged Children Survey research network is an international alliance of researchers coordinated by WHO that collaborates on cross-national surveys of school students.

[19] UNICEF, *Hidden in Plain Sight: A statistical analysis of violence against children* (2014).

[20] See http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/bullying-definitions-final-a.pdf.

[21] A/HRC/31/20, para. 62.

21. Online communication is now a part of children's daily life. Children shift effortlessly between the physical and virtual worlds and regard the distinction between the two as irrelevant.[22] As a result, they are increasingly exposed to the dangers of cyberbullying. In Europe, where over 80 per cent of children between 5 and 14 years of age use mobile telephones,[23] it is reported that between 2010 and 2014 cyberbullying increased from 8 to 12 per cent, especially among girls and children at younger ages.[24]

22. While there is still a significant digital divide worldwide, with Internet penetration in developing countries at around 32 per cent compared to a global average of 40 per cent, the number of Internet users in the developing world doubled between 2009 and 2014.[25]

23. In view of these developments, there is a need for the consolidation of statistical information on bullying and for enhanced international agreement on a robust and validated set of indicators and sound methodologies for data gathering to enable consistent and regular reporting.

24. The UNICEF Office of Research Innocenti is developing a global bullying database using recent data on bullying among 11- to 15-year-olds taken from six international surveys covering 145 countries.[26] The database will enable analysis of the prevalence of bullying by age and sex, and will show how reported rates are affected by the different definitions used in the surveys[27] in order to support the development of internationally agreed indicators of measurement.

25. Most current studies on bullying are carried out through school-based surveys, which are selective in terms of their target population, usually excluding schoolchildren with special needs, out-of-school children and children who are not in school for fear of being bullied, and the results are thus likely to underestimate the full extent of this behaviour.

26. In 2016, UNICEF, in cooperation with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General, carried out an online opinion poll to gather the views of over 100,000 young people worldwide on their experience of bullying.[28] Participants provided information about how they experienced bullying, how it affected them and what prevention and response measures are needed. The resulting "U-Report" presents compelling data on the pervasiveness of bullying behaviour globally.

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[22] Ibid., para. 71.

[23] See International Telecommunication Union, *Use of Information and Communication Technology by the World's Children and Youth*, Geneva, 2008.

[24] Livingstone, S., Macheroni, G., Olafsson, K. and Haddon, L., "Children's online risks and opportunities: comparative findings from EU Kids Online and Net Children Go Mobile", London School of Economics and Political Science, 2014.

[25] See http://srsg.violenceagainstchildren.org/page/1154.

[26] WHO, Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children; WHO Global School-based Student Health Surveys; Trends in Mathematics and Science Study; Children's World Report (2015); Latin American Laboratory for Assessment of the Quality of Education, Second (2008) and Third (2015) Regional Comparative and Explanatory Studies.

[27] See Richardson, Dominic, and Hiu, Chii Fen, UNICEF, Office of Research, Innocenti Research Centre, "Developing a global indicator on bullying of school-aged children", April 2016.

[28] Children and adolescents in Burkina Faso, Chile, Guinea, Indonesia, Ireland, Liberia, Malaysia, Mali, Mexico, Mozambique, Nigeria, Pakistan, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Swaziland, Uganda and Ukraine participated in the survey.

Results of the "U-Report" on information flow regarding bullying

Of the over 100,000 children and adolescents surveyed:

1. Nine in 10 believed that bullying is a problem.

2. Two-thirds reported that they had been victims of bullying.

3. Opinions on why bullying happens were evenly split between four reasons: because adults do not see it; because kids are mean; because it's part of school; or for no discernible reason.

4. One-quarter reported that they had been bullied because of their physical appearance; one-quarter because of their gender or sexuality, almost one-quarter because of their ethnicity or national origin; and over one-quarter for unspecified reasons.

5. One-third thought that being bullied was normal and did not tell anyone; one-quarter did not know who to tell; over 4 in 10 did not tell anyone either because they were afraid or ashamed.

6. Over one-third of those who identified themselves as victims told a friend or sibling about it; one-third told no one; one-third told an adult; and less than 1 in 10 told a teacher.

7. Over 8 in 10 believed that their Governments should raise awareness in order to stop bullying in schools; and almost one-third believed that classroom discussions should be promoted.

C. Bullying is among children's top concerns

> "You don't always tell someone at school, because telling someone can also be a reason you get bullied".
>
> *17-year-old boy*[1]

27. Bullying is among children's top concerns. This is confirmed by the recent report issued by Child Helpline International on violence against children, which highlights that bullying is the most frequently cited reason why children contact a helpline,[29] as well as by the outcomes from the children's consultation promoted by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General with the Government of Uruguay and the Global Movement for Children, Latin America and the Caribbean section, during which children reflected on the root causes of bullying and on the urgency of prevention and response measures. As revealed in the testimony of the children themselves, bullying compromises a child's being, it is part of a painful continuum, and urgent action is needed to stop it.

28. Peer relationships are an important component of children's lives, providing them with a sense of well-being, confidence and self-esteem. Especially in adolescence, when they tend to rely heavily on peers for support and social acceptance, young people are likely to be self-conscious and vulnerable to a range

[29] See http://www.childhelplineinternational.org/media/149816/violence_against_children.pdf.

of insecurities. Being bullied is the antithesis of the affirming environment adolescents require as they transition into adulthood when a rupture of friendship and trust may amplify feelings of isolation, loneliness or helplessness, possibly setting off a negative trajectory of risky behaviour.

29. Episodes of bullying, which are carried out in plain sight in school environments, may not always be visible to teachers, who may not be able, willing or trained to read the signs of peer-to-peer bullying behaviour.

30. Harm can be prevented when children are provided with safe and welcoming spaces within the school environment and when adults model positive behaviour. Teachers can work with students to identify the places and times where children may feel unsafe, school staff can monitor unsupervised areas where children may be at risk, and adult supervision can ensure safety in school grounds used by children before school, between classes and after lessons.

31. Children who are victims of bullying are not always willing to report these incidents to parents, teachers or other adults either because of fear of reprisal or punishment against a known perpetrator, which may backfire on them, or, in the case of cyberbullying, because they are afraid of losing their computer, Internet or cell phone privileges.

D. Groups at heightened risk

32. All children are at risk of bullying, but those in vulnerable situations, who face stigmatization, discrimination or exclusion, are more likely to be bullied both in person and online. These include children who are: living with disabilities; from disadvantaged backgrounds; refugees, displaced or seeking asylum; indigenous or belong to ethnic, racial, linguistic, cultural or religious minorities; facing discrimination because their appearance does not meet cultural preferences; perceived as having a sexual orientation or gender identity different from what is seen as the norm; or unable to go to school or excluded from it.

33. Children who are socially and economically disadvantaged often face discrimination and denigration in school. Poor children who are victims of bullying, humiliation and abuse may feel powerless to speak out for fear that they will not be believed or that they will be blamed for having caused incidents of violence.[30] Children living in poverty are more likely to be suspended or expelled from school, and their parents may feel powerless or lack the necessary information to defend them from discriminatory actions by school officials or from bullying by other children.

34. Children with disabilities and special educational needs are at high risk of bullying. For them, social media offers opportunities as well as dangers, and many report that they may be actively discouraged from going online because caregivers fear that they may be bullied or because of concerns about Internet safety. Others may not be able to enjoy the benefits of ICTs because of physical barriers. Research reveals, however, that using the Internet can be empowering for these children because it allows them to connect with others with similar experiences, provides

[30] See ATD Fourth World, *Making Human Rights Work for People Living in Extreme Poverty: a handbook for implementing the United Nations Guiding Principles on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights*, World Franciscan International, 2015.

them with support through social forums and helps them to build personal networks to help combat bullying or isolation.[31]

35. Bullying of asylum seeking, refugee and migrant children has much in common with bias incidents, harassment and hate crimes, which typically involve discrimination on the basis of race, colour, ethnicity, religion or other identity factors. "Immigrant bullying" has been defined as "bullying that targets another's immigrant status or family history of immigration in the form of taunts and slurs, derogatory references to the immigration process, physical aggression, social manipulation or exclusion because of immigration status".[32]

36. In schools, bullying often includes a gender dimension and is associated with gender-based violence, as part of unspoken, unconscious or hidden attitudes that promote gender stereotyping. Boys may taunt each other about their lack of masculinity or harass girls with verbal and physical gestures that are sexual in nature. Girls may use more covert yet equally damaging tactics, including gossip disseminated on social media, which makes the behaviour difficult for adults to see. Gender-based violence negatively affects both boys and girls.

37. Adolescent girls are often at risk of cyberbullying associated with sexual abuse. Threats include the sharing of messages or images of a sexual nature (sexting), or the promotion of online intimidation and harassment (cyberstalking), sometimes with a view to obtaining sexual favours from victims or coercing them into performing sexual acts (sexual extortion).

38. Homophobic bullying, including cyberbullying, is widespread, and in this regard schools can be particularly threatening social spaces. As noted in a recent report of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO),[33] lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students are more likely to experience such violence at school rather than at home or in the community, with psychological violence, including social exclusion and verbal bullying, the most commonly reported. Homophobic bullying often aggravates the sense of isolation of its victims. Entrenched beliefs that girls and boys must follow rules of conduct and/or appearance based on their biological sex contribute to this pattern of behaviour. Those who do not conform run a high risk of being exposed to bullying both in person and virtually. Homophobic bullying may take place at school, on the way to school and online, creating an inescapable continuum of threatening experiences that leaves victims feeling isolated, unsafe and worthless, while also putting them at risk of missing classes or of dropping out of school altogether.

39. In May 2016, at the International Ministerial Meeting on Education Sector Responses to Violence Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity/Expression organized by UNESCO in Paris, Governments adopted the "Call for Action: Inclusive and equitable education for all learners in an environment free from

[31] A/HRC/31/20, para. 78.

[32] Scherr, T. G. and Larson, J., "Bullying Dynamics Associated with Race, Ethnicity, and Immigration Status", in Jimerson, S.R., Swearer, S.M. and Espelage, D.L. (eds.), *Handbook of Bullying in Schools: An International Perspective*, New York, Routledge, Taylor and Francis, 2010.

[33] UNESCO "Out in the Open: Education sector responses to violence based on sexual orientation or gender identity/expression", Paris, 2016.

discrimination and violence",[34] the first document of its kind on homophobic and transphobic violence in education.

Call for Action

The Call for Action recognized that any form of discrimination and/or violence, including bullying, in educational settings is an obstacle to the enjoyment of the right to education and to equal access to educational opportunities of learners, and no country can achieve inclusive and equitable quality education or equal access to educational opportunities if any learners are discriminated against or experience violence because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity/expression.

Recalling cross-regional evidence indicating that learners who are perceived not to conform to gender norms or stereotypes report a higher prevalence of violence, with significant negative impacts on their education, health and well-being, Governments acknowledged the need for a comprehensive approach that promotes inclusion and diversity and prevents and addresses violence, and committed themselves to reinforcing efforts to that end, including efforts to prevent and address bullying based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression, taking into account the specificities of different legal and sociocultural contexts, and to ensuring cooperation between countries in sharing best practices. To address the problem, the Call for Action recommended strategic actions, including: (a) monitoring the prevalence of violence in educational settings; (b) establishing comprehensive national and school-level policies; (c) providing learners with age-appropriate, non-judgemental, human rights-based and accurate information on harmful gender stereotypes; (d) providing training for teachers and school staff; (e) ensuring safe, inclusive and supportive school environments; and (f) evaluating the efficiency, effectiveness and impact of responses to violence.

E. Impact of bullying

40. Research shows that children who are bullied are likely to experience problems with their health and their psychological well-being, including feelings of low self-esteem, anxiety, depression and helplessness.

41. There is increasing evidence showing that the psychological health of children who act as bullies is also affected: perpetrators are reported to be more likely to be involved in anti-social behaviour and to have an increased risk of depression later on in life.[35]

[34] https://en.unesco.org/themes/homophobic-and-transphobic-violence-education.

[35] Ttofi, Maria M., Farrington, David P., Losel, Friedrich and Loeber, Rolf, "Do the victims of school bullies tend to become depressed later in life? A systematic review and meta-analysis of longitudinal studies" *Journal of Aggression, Conflict and Peace Research*, vol. 3, No. 2, 2011 (http://njbullying.org/documents/Ttofi2011.pdf).

42. Studies also suggest that around half of all children involved in bullying are both victims and perpetrators, and that these children are particularly troubled and in need of urgent support.[36]

43. It is well documented that children's performance at school may suffer due to psychological distress or that they may play truant to avoid being bullied. School drop-out rates can also be higher among victims of bullying and cyberbullying. The impact of such behaviour depends on the character and circumstances of the victim, the particular type of bullying and the degree to which it violates a child's integrity and dignity, but victims commonly experience fear, distress, anger, insecurity, lowered self-esteem, a sense of shame and even suicidal thoughts.[37]

44. The situation of out-of-school children is particularly unfortunate because these children are not only deprived of their right to education they may also be stigmatized and shunned by teachers and others within the school community.

III. Measures to prevent and address bullying, including cyberbullying

> "The best thing I did was to tell someone — I wouldn't be here if I hadn't done that."
>
> *14-year-old girl*[1]

45. As highlighted in submissions received for the preparation of the report of the Secretary-General, significant measures have been undertaken at the national level to prevent and address bullying, in particular: initiatives to raise public awareness and mobilize support to prevent and address the phenomenon; efforts to inform and assist children; public policies and legislation to secure children's protection, including efforts to strengthen the capacity of schools in early detection and response; and restorative practices to repair harm, restore relationships and avoid recidivism.

A. Prevention, awareness-raising and children's empowerment initiatives

46. Anti-bullying initiatives include: information and awareness-raising campaigns to deepen understanding of what constitutes this kind of behaviour, its traumatic nature and its associated risks and consequences; the promotion of ethical communication that strengthens values, concern for others and children's sense of responsibility in preventing discrimination, promoting respect for human rights and fostering safety in school and online; and informing children about how to protect themselves, how to cope with the distress abuse can cause, how to enhance their resilience and how to avoid situations where their right to privacy, image, honour and reputation may be compromised. Both at school and online, children need guidance in developing their ability to make good decisions and in building and

[36] Veenstra, R., Lindenberg, S., Oldehinkel, A.J., De Winter, A.F., Verhulst, F.C., and Ormel, J. (2005), "Bullying and Victimization in Elementary Schools: A Comparison of Bullies, Victims, Bully/Victims, and Uninvolved Preadolescents", *Developmental Psychology*, vol. 41, No. 4, pp. 672-682.

[37] http://www.hbsc.org/publications/factsheets/Bullying-and-fighting-english.pdf.

strengthening positive values and life skills, including taking responsibility for their actions towards others.

47. In the 1990s, research pioneered by Dr. Dan Olweus informed the adoption of anti-bullying legislation in Norway and Sweden.[38] Subsequently, the Norwegian Government adopted a manifesto against bullying, calling for collaborative action across a wide range of stakeholders and recognizing the responsibility of adults and caregivers for ensuring children's inclusion in decision-making, obtaining the needed skills to prevent bullying and acting as good role models. In 2015, steps were taken to improve the knowledge of school staff about prevention, detection and response, to enhance support services and to provide guidance for children and parents, as well as to strengthen the capacity of the Ombudsman for Children.

48. Sponsored by the Ministry of Education and Culture of Finland, the KiVa anti-bullying programme is used in 90 per cent of comprehensive schools throughout the country. KiVa has three dimensions: prevention; the consideration of individual cases; and the monitoring of changes over time, including the provision of annual feedback for each school about implementation and outcomes.

49. The KiVa programme encourages investment in teachers and in the overall school climate, stressing the importance of listening to children and ensuring that they have a voice. It recommends: (a) addressing a bullying incident immediately within the classroom rather than lecturing students about it at length; (b) mandatory pre-service teacher training; and (c) training of all staff so that they are prepared to take steps to prevent and stop bullying within the school setting.[39] Evaluations of the KiVa programme have found that national rates of bullying and victimization have decreased since its introduction.

50. The Government of the United States of America, informed by significant research and surveys,[40] has created a comprehensive resource for prevention and response, including a dedicated site that provides information to children and parents on the nature of bullying, about who may be at risk, how it can be prevented and addressed, and how, when and where to report cases of cyberbullying.[41]

51. Worldwide, there are numerous initiatives to prevent and address bullying. The Indonesian Government, in cooperation with a wide range of stakeholders, has launched a social media campaign that includes initiatives led by young people to raise awareness, empower children and promote peer support.

52. In Ghana, where bullying has been identified as a key concern that compromises children's safety in school, guidance and counselling have been provided for teachers, a toolkit has been developed for families and communities and the participation of children has been promoted.

53. In the Philippines, the Anti-Bullying Act (2013) provides the framework for national awareness-raising and capacity-building initiatives, including parenting and family information sessions and orientation for professional groups and community leaders.

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[38] http://www.violencepreventionworks.org/public/olweus_history.page.

[39] http://www.kivaprogram.net.

[40] http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2015/2015056.pdf.

[41] http://www.stopbullying.gov.

54. In Mexico, the national anti-bullying campaign has focused on raising awareness at the local level, providing parents with support and guidance to identify and address changes in their children's behaviour associated with cyberbullying. In Argentina and Chile, efforts have focused on teacher training, workshops for students and parental guidance, as well as clinical care for victims and bullies to prevent recidivism. In the Czech Republic, a special centre provides information on online risks, including on cyberbullying, cyber-grooming, cyberstalking, sexting and the sharing of personal information through social networks and other potentially risky communications. In Lebanon, emphasis has been placed on training teachers in online safety and on the prevention and reporting of cyberbullying.

55. Anti-bullying health policies[42] and prevention programmes[43] are critical in addressing the psychosocial hazards posed by bullying. In the World Health Organization (WHO) *Global Status Report on Violence Prevention*,[44] countries reported on the widespread use of life-skills and social development programmes to help children manage anger issues, resolve conflicts in a non-violent way and develop social problem-solving skills.

56. The 2016 WHO global plan of action to strengthen the role of the health system within a national muitisectoral response to address interpersonal violence, in particular against women and girls and against children,[45] and the release of INSPIRE,[46] a package of evidence-based strategies for ending violence against children, provide critical tools to strengthen prevention and response efforts.

57. In 2013, UNICEF launched its #ENDviolence initiative to advance the prevention of violence against children worldwide, combining communication efforts with action by national partners. In countries such as Albania, Bulgaria, Malaysia, New Zealand, South Africa and Vanuatu, the initiative has drawn attention to the prevalence and impact of bullying, prompted action by Governments, civil society and the private sector and identified key areas for further action and research.

58. The "*Basta de Bullying: No te quedes callado*" campaign, sponsored since 2012 by the Cartoon Network Latin America[47] in cooperation with Plan International and World Vision, reaches 60 million households in the Latin American region, promoting awareness-raising and workshops to build the capacity of children, educators and parents to deal with bullying and to address the discrimination that often underlies violent behaviour. To date, 1.4 million students and adults have signed the campaign's anti-bullying pledge.

59. Facebook has teamed up with specialists from the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence on a bullying prevention hub for teens, parents and educators, which includes information on how to block and report online bullying, how to

[42] Srabstein, Jorge, C. and Leventhal, Bennett, L., "Prevention of bullying-related morbidity and mortality: a call for public health policies", *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*, Geneva, 2010.

[43] WHO, "Preventing youth violence: an overview of the evidence", Geneva, 2015.

[44] WHO, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Global Status Report on Violence Prevention*, Geneva, 2014, table 5.

[45] World Health Assembly, resolution WHA69.5.

[46] http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/inspire/en/.

[47] http://bastadebullying.com and http://www.chegadebullying.com.br.

communicate if a posting is unwelcome and how to ask that it be taken down, as well as measures to manage privacy settings.

60. These promising programmes need to be fully evaluated, and children should be included in such efforts. Research shows that children themselves develop strategies to deal with negative cyberbullying experiences, including by blocking contacts, withholding personal details, finding advice online, changing privacy settings and making selective use of websites.[48]

B. Public policies to prevent and respond to bullying and cyberbullying

61. The Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Optional Protocols thereto provide a robust legal framework to ensure children's protection from bullying and to address the challenges associated with online abuse.

62. Guided by article 19 of the Convention, the Committee on the Rights of the Child, in its general comment No. 13 (2011) on the right of the child to freedom from all forms of violence,[49] addressed psychological bullying and hazing by adults or other children, including through the use of ICTs.

63. The Committee noted that it is the obligation of the State to prevent and tackle violence against children, which requires the implementation of educational measures to address behavioural practices that condone such violence, including: strengthening children's life skills so that they can protect themselves from specific risks, including those related to ICTs; the provision of accessible and age-appropriate information on risks and self-protection; support in developing positive peer relationships; and their greater overall empowerment.

64. A number of Member States have developed policies to prevent and address bullying, with a special emphasis on the school environment. In Costa Rica[50] and the Dominican Republic,[51] the "*Convivencia Escolar*" programme helps to enhance respectful and friendly relations in schools through the engagement of students, teachers and school staff, parents and local authorities. This has led to improved early detection and response, including through dialogue, mediation and restorative approaches.

65. In Mexico, in 2014, the "*Convivencia sin violencia*"[52] campaign was introduced to bring attention to bullying in schools and to promote peaceful social interaction. The campaign included an anti-bullying initiative, *Proyecto a favor de la convivencia escolar*, through which the educational community, including parents, students and civil society actors, were given access to resources and recommendations on how to support and protect children both within and outside school.[53] The initiative advances the peaceful resolution of conflict, self-control and the development of coping abilities.

[48] See http://srsg.violenceagainstchildren.org/page/1154.
[49] CRC/C/GC/13.
[50] See http://www.mep.go.cr/sites/default/files/recursos/archivo/convivir.pdf.
[51] See http://www.educando.edu.do/files/5914/1200/1735/Normas_de_convivencia_16-0_-014.pdf.
[52] http://www.iniciativamexico.org/perfiles/convivencia_sin_violencia.
[53] http://www.sepyc.gob.mx/documentacion/Gu%C3%ADa%20para%20el%20docente%203%C2%B0.pdf.

66. In South Africa, the National School Safety Framework (2015) includes resources for the prevention of bullying and cyberbullying, homophobic bullying and gender-based violence. Implementation measures include training manuals and e-safety guidelines, the promotion of the national Anti-Bullying and Behaviour Change Campaign, the appointment of counsellors to provide psychosocial support and school patrollers to provide security in and around schools, as well as measures to ensure the early identification of bullying behaviour, the inclusion of restorative approaches and support for victims.

67. In France, bullying prevention has been a priority for the Ministry of National Education. Students are given training and support and are informed of available services, while the responsibilities of school administration are clearly identified. An Internet site[54] sets out national policies and programmes for the general public.

68. In Ontario, Canada, the Comprehensive Action Plan for Accepting Schools includes legislation and resources on bullying prevention and intervention, while the Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy identifies discriminatory biases and systemic barriers to student achievement, promotes the participation of parents in their children's education and in the promotion of safe and inclusive schools and provides counselling and guidance on Internet safety.

69. In Ireland, the National Action Plan on Bullying (2013) promotes the development of school policies, including strategies to combat homophobic bullying. The plan was informed by consultations with children and young people, who placed an emphasis on prevention, including the need for: (a) all members of the school community to understand the various manifestations and consequences of bullying; (b) schools to tackle the underlying causes of bullying by promoting a culture of respect for the dignity of every person; and (c) children and young people to learn about and value diversity. The plan also called for: new national anti-bullying procedures for schools; support for training for school administrators and parents; the creation of a positive school culture to tackle bullying; the creation of a national anti-bullying website; support for awareness-raising campaigns; and research on the prevalence and impact of bullying linked to social media, on mental health and suicidal behaviour among young people and on effective support for children with special educational needs.

C. Legislation on children's protection from bullying and cyberbullying

70. Legislation is a key element of a comprehensive response to violence against children and an essential building block of a strong national child protection system. Laws convey a clear message to society condemning violence against children, set out guidance on how to ensure the protection of children, provide redress and means to fight impunity and provide the foundation for a culture of respect for children's rights, triggering a process of social change in attitudes and behaviours.

71. In addition, legislation needs to permeate the work of institutions and shape the training and ethical standards of professionals working with and for children, and to ensure the availability of accessible and child-sensitive, confidential and safe

[54] "*Agir contre le harcèlement à l'École*" (http://www.education.gouv.fr/cid86060/agir-contre-le-harcelement-a-l-ecole.html).

counselling, reporting and complaint mechanisms to address incidents of violence and provide needed support to child victims.

72. Several approaches have been pursued in developing national legislation. The adoption of specific anti-bullying legislation, particularly on cyberbullying, is a relatively recent phenomenon, which makes it difficult to draw firm conclusions about its impact and long-term effectiveness. Moreover, the absence of specific legislation does not necessarily indicate a legal vacuum, since States may address bullying using current provisions in their constitutional, criminal, civil and educational law. In criminal law, this encompasses provisions concerning harassment, assault, disclosure of personal information and incitement to hatred. Civil law provides remedies such as taking action for defamation or harassment, and redress may also be sought through national Ombudsman's institutions or data-protection agencies.

73. Some countries have established specific offences, including student harassment, disclosure of intimate photographs without consent and malicious impersonation online, to address distinct aspects of bullying and cyberbullying. New Zealand has adopted the Harmful Digital Communications Act (2015), which criminalizes the sending of messages and the posting of material online that deliberately cause serious emotional distress or incitement to suicide. The legislation is designed to deter and prevent harmful communications, reduce their impact on victims and establish new systems for quickly resolving complaints and removing damaging online material. It provides a broad range of court-ordered remedies, including: taking down material; publishing a correction or an apology; giving the complainant a right of reply; or releasing the identity of the source of an anonymous communication.

74. In other countries remedies have been established enabling victims of bullying to initiate civil proceedings or to seek protection orders, as well as measures prohibiting communication with a specified person, restricting the use of means of electronic communication or confiscating, temporarily or permanently, electronic devices used for cyberbullying.

75. Legislation may involve the establishment of a dedicated body to tackle cyberbullying, including the investigation of complaints, setting standards for online safety, liaising with Internet intermediaries and end users responsible for generating content to find a swift resolution to complaints or issuing formal requests to Internet intermediaries or end users to remove material. In Australia, the Enhancing Online Safety for Children Act (2015) established a Children's eSafety Commissioner to administer a complaints system for cyberbullying material, providing for the rapid removal from social media of damaging material targeted at a child while also promoting online safety for children.

76. In other cases, legislation has been focused on the school environment, in view of its critical potential to prevent and tackle this phenomenon.

77. In Mexico, the Law on the Protection of the Rights of Children and Adolescents (2014) requires authorities to: devise strategies for the early detection, prevention and elimination of bullying; develop training for public servants and school staff; and establish mechanisms that provide care, counselling and protection of children who are being threatened in school.

78. In Peru, a law passed in 2011 promotes a safe school environment and establishes mechanisms for the prevention, identification, response and elimination of bullying. Each school is required to appoint a psychologist responsible for prevention and for response to any incidents. Recognizing the importance of a collaborative effort between all stakeholders, the law establishes clear responsibilities for the Ministry of Education, school councils, headmasters and teachers, as well as for parents and caregivers.

79. In the Philippines, the Anti-Bullying Act (2013) requires that all elementary and secondary schools adopt policies to address incidents of bullying, establish relevant mechanisms and reporting requirements and outline sanctions for non-compliance.

80. In Sweden, the Education Act (2010) identifies measures that schools must take to prevent bullying and their responsibility to investigate and take appropriate measures against degrading treatment. It also requires that schools report and investigate all alleged incidents of bullying and have an annual plan to prevent and address it.

81. In Japan, the Promotion of Measures to Prevent Bullying Act (2013) requires schools to establish groups composed of teachers, staff and experts in psychology, child welfare and related fields to implement bullying prevention measures. Schools are also obliged to strengthen their capacity to counsel and consult with children and young people.

D. Restorative approaches to prevent and address bullying

82. Restorative practices have been used to address violence against children in different settings, including the juvenile justice system. They provide promising avenues to promote safe, inclusive and tolerant schools and to prevent and address bullying.[55]

83. At the heart of restorative practices is the goal of repairing harm and mending relationships rather than meting out punishment and retribution. In the school setting, restorative practices serve as an alternative to traditional disciplinary measures, such as suspension or expulsion, helping to reintegrate the perpetrator into the school community.

84. Restorative approaches are rooted in the values of fairness, acceptance of responsibility, transparency, the empowerment of victims, communal empathy, resilience and the involvement of the whole community.

85. In schools, restorative practices involve victim-offender mediation, group conferences and peacemaking or restorative circles, including the teaching of conflict resolution, the training of student mediators to solve conflicts among their peers and the setting up of associations of parents and teachers to play a supportive role in the mediation process.

86. Restorative approaches can give children a chance to tell their side of the story and be listened to, to find a way to resolve their negative feelings and to establish a

[55] Fronius, Trevor, Persson, Hannah, Guckenburg, Sarah, Hurley, Nancy and Petrosino, Anthony, "Restorative Justice in U.S. Schools", WestEd Justice & Prevention Research Center, February 2016.

sense of restitution for what they have suffered. For children who have bullied others, this approach can help them to understand and take responsibility for the harm caused, and to engage in solutions that can help provide redress to the victim and prevent recidivism.

87. Although research on the impact of restorative practices in schools is limited, available evidence suggests that they may have positive effects, including: improvement in school attendance and school climate and culture; greater community and parent engagement; decreased use of exclusionary discipline; increased student connectedness; and decreased levels of fighting and bullying.

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

88. Bullying affects a high percentage of children, compromising their health, emotional well-being and academic work, and is associated with long-lasting consequences that continue on into adulthood.

89. Parents, schools and State institutions have a special responsibility for securing children's protection from the risks associated with bullying. Around the world there are ongoing efforts to prevent and address this behaviour. Importantly, data on the prevalence of bullying, including cyberbullying, is being compiled, focused research is being advanced and the subject is being given unprecedented attention by the international community.

90. Nevertheless, a wide empathy gap remains: many adults are blind to incidents of bullying, failing to understand the trauma it causes or still perceiving it as a rite of passage; and countless children are still frightened to speak out and suffer in isolation and hopelessness.

91. While bullying is among children's top concerns, it can be prevented when children are provided with safe and welcoming spaces and when adults support them and model positive behaviour. Significant measures have been taken at the national level to prevent and respond to bullying and cyberbullying, but much work remains to be done.

92. To prevent and address bullying and cyberbullying the following measures should be given special attention:

(a) Information, awareness-raising and social mobilization initiatives to deepen understanding of bullying, its traumatic nature and associated risks and consequences for children's enjoyment of their rights and for society as a whole and to provide guidance on coping, resilience and redress mechanisms and effective prevention and response interventions: these initiatives, which must be sustained over time and provide opportunities for practical feedback, should commit all stakeholders to promote a change in attitudes and norms that condone or perpetuate peer violence among children;

(b) Evidence-based initiatives to strengthen children's life skills and values, including respect for human rights, concern for others and responsibility to foster safety, and to inform children about ways of preventing violent behaviour in person or online, promoting mediation and peaceful resolution of conflicts, coping with distress and enhancing resilience: programmes that work with children, including

interventions that teach the basic skills of active listening, empathy and supportiveness, can help them cope with violence;

(c) Children's participation and contributions need to be at the heart of these efforts: they must be empowered and given the skills and confidence to stand up against bullying and seek help, to strengthen a positive peer culture and to become effective agents in prevention and response, supporting a safe learning environment for all; guided by ethical standards, they should be involved in the development of initiatives to prevent and address bullying and their potential to support the creation of violence-free schools should be maximized, including through the establishment of appropriate structures to facilitate their participation in decision-making;

(d) Children must be informed of available support services, including safe, accessible, age and child-sensitive, confidential and independent counselling and reporting mechanisms, as well as of procedures in place to support them in this process;

(e) While explicit protections from bullying and an inclusive and safe learning environment are required for all children, children in vulnerable situations must be prioritized in efforts to promote the values of human rights, mutual respect and tolerance for diversity and to overcome stigmatization, discrimination or exclusion in person and online;

(f) Parents and caregivers should be supported in developing non-violent discipline skills and provided with information and advice on how to identify the warning signs of bullying so that they can understand and act upon risks and support their children in preventing and addressing incidents by promoting empathy in the home as well as a positive school climate, modelling respectful and compassionate communication and avoiding aggressive, intimidating and abusive behaviour;

(g) Whole-school and whole-community programmes should be promoted to prevent and combat bullying and to safeguard children's physical and emotional safety and their academic achievement: promoting a child-centred and multidisciplinary approach, engaging students, teachers, school staff, parents and local authorities, is critical in ensuring social inclusion, safety and mutual respect in the school environment, as well as early detection and prompt action to address violent behaviour: with strong leadership and sustained investment, including adequate resources for effective implementation, a whole-school approach promotes policies and codes of conduct imbued with the human rights values of tolerance and respect for diversity and their integration into the school curricula and culture and strengthens a shared commitment to uphold them, monitor progress in their implementation and swiftly follow up on reported cases of bullying;

(h) Teachers can play a crucial role in preventing bullying by raising awareness of children's rights, organizing regular classroom discussions, supporting school mediation, promoting parents' involvement and strengthening children's participation in establishing principles and practices on prevention and response: teachers need specialized training to facilitate discussions about bullying because children may be afraid to share information with adults, and capacity-building initiatives should involve all school staff in advancing a clear understanding of which behaviours constitute bullying and warrant a response and should provide skills to investigate and resolve such incidents;

(i) Clear and comprehensive legislation on children's protection from bullying provides an invaluable tool in prevention and response: national legislation is critical in order to specify prohibited conduct; safeguard the rights of affected children; establish safe and child-sensitive counselling and reporting procedures; inform victims of avenues of redress; provide guidance on the investigation and recording of incidents; and provide advice and training to prevent, identify and respond to bullying: legislation is equally important in the establishment of specific protection measures for groups at special risk and of restorative approaches, and, in adopting legislation, care must be taken to avoid the imposition of measures that could worsen children's sense of alienation or resentment or place them at further risk of victimization or criminalization;

(j) Breaking the silence and promoting a positive change in attitudes about bullying requires the collection and wide dissemination of accurate, reliable and disaggregated data on its scale and nature: internationally agreed definitions of what constitutes bullying behaviour and the development of standardized and validated indicators, along with sound research methodologies, will be needed to support this work; data gathered using agreed protocols will help ensure that bullying estimates are internationally comparable and will support the design of evidence-based prevention programmes as well the measurement of progress in their implementation;

(k) Further research is needed on the dimensions of bullying that have been neglected, including young children's experiences, the nature and impact of bullying on children in the global South and its impact over the life cycle.